

# ROLLING OUT



BRIAN BASHAM/The Citizen

A car heading up Simonton Street pulls into a lane of oncoming traffic to pass several bikers Tuesday afternoon in Key West. Key West officials have hired Maryland-based firm Toole Design Group to complete its bicycle and pedestrian master plan, with the hope of making the Southernmost City easier for non-motorists to circumnavigate.

## Firm hired for biking, walking master plan

BY SCOTT UNGER

Key West Citizen

Work has begun on an estimated one-year project creating a bike and pedestrian master plan for the City of Key West.

Through a \$250,000 grant from the Florida Department of Transportation, the city hired Toole Design Group last week to a two-year contract with an optional third

year to carry out its 10-point plan creating a safe bicycling network of lanes and access routes around Key West and including Stock Island, according to Bike and Pedestrian Coordinator Chris Hamilton.

"We want to make a connected bike network where people feel safe," Hamilton said. "A lot of people only feel safe on the really slow residential streets and they're reluctant to get out on (the busier roads).

So what we want to make sure is that there's safe connections that everyone feels safe on."

"The network that we have now suddenly ends. (The goal is to) get some sort of bike network that's safe and crisscrosses the entire town."

Originally based in Silver Springs, Maryland, Toole Design specializes in bicycle and pedestrian transporta-

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## Plan

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tion, having completed similar plans for large cities including Baltimore, Maryland, Dallas, Texas and Seattle, Washington and smaller cities such as Charleston, South Carolina and Coral Gables, Florida, according to the company website.

"They'll work with (the city) and our departments ... and work with the community and help us envision and figure out how to make Key West safer for pedestrians and bikes so that more people bike and walk," Hamilton said.

The group will begin by assessing what is already in place in terms of paths and signage, then conduct field research including counts of cars and bikers to find out how to improve the transportation system, Hamilton said.

Community outreach will be a key component to the project, with plans to organize a public participation plan outlining target audiences, engagement tactics and outreach activities, according to the contract.

Toole will also use social media, community and business events and advertising to generate public input,



BRIAN BASHAM/The Citizen

**A biker in the bike lane along Fleming Street avoids a truck in the driving lane of the one-way street Tuesday afternoon.**

according to the contract.

The group expressed interest in partnering with the Key West High School videography team to create "street films," which will document the project and existing road conditions using handheld, stationary or mounted cameras, the proposal states.

Hamilton and a small group of city officials and

community members will work closely with Toole throughout the project, Hamilton said.

Toole outlines the need for a realistic, detailed plan that is completely integrated and addresses the needs of both pedestrians and bikers, according to its proposal.

Suggested work will be grouped into one, five and

10-year projects, with smaller projects, such as resurfacing a roadway, able to move forward quickly. Potential long-term projects, such as protected bike infrastructures that separate bike lanes from traffic, will be researched by Toole so funding requests and design work can be ready for FDOT when the time comes, Hamilton said.

Toole will be paid \$248,150 for the master plan creation, with a timeline estimated at one year. The options for a longer contract are in place in case additional work is needed after the initial project, Hamilton said.

"Our intent and Toole's intent is to get this done in a year and if there's any follow-up actions we can apply to the state (for additional funding)," he said. "That's why we made the contract a little longer than one year. If there's any follow-up, we want to be ready to go."

Community involvement is encouraged throughout the project and more information can be found on the City of Key West website at <http://www.cityofkeywestfl.gov/topic/subtopic.php?topicid=172&structureid=273> or the Car-Free Key West Facebook page, Hamilton said.

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# THE CITIZEN

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Lady 'Fins pour on the offense — Page 1B



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## WEATHER



**Austin India, 100 grads**  
The Graduate School  
See forecast on Page 2A

## FLORIDA

### Indian tribesmen join python hunt

Florida has gone half-way around the world to get help with its python problem.

Wildlife officials recruited tribesmen from India to hunt the Burmese pythons believed to be decimating native mammals in the Everglades. Page 3A

## FLORIDA

### Environment head takes new position

Florida's chief environmental regulator, who has had a career spanning two years on the job, is taking a position with a law firm paid millions by the state to help with a high-stakes water battle with Georgia.

Jon Stevenson, the secretary for the Department of Environmental Protection, submitted his resignation letter to Gov. Rick Scott late last week. Page 3A

## ON THE RADIO



Long distance runner Diana Reed will be in Key West this weekend for several events, including the Women's Flag Football tournament, the opening of an exhibit at the Customs House and EverWalk.com with a walk around the city Saturday morning.

Also on today's show: a Jail Walk — Key West High School

## Informant testifies in bomb case

BY ADAM LINHARDT

Key West Citizen

The blue curtains went up Tuesday in the federal courtroom in Key West as an undercover FBI informant took the stand to describe his interactions with a Stock Island man with alleged ties to the Islamic State, accused of buying an insect bomb from agents.

U.S. District Judge Jose R. Martinez granted a request from the U.S. Attorney's Office that allowed the informant to use his undercover name "Muhammad" and put up large curtains that blocked the court proceedings from public view.

Despite the inability to see the man, it was the first time the public, as well as jurors, heard the origin story of how "Muhammad" befriended Harlan Suarez online and then began meeting him in Key West in 2015 as they planned a terrorist attack in the Southernmost City.

Suarez, 25, is accused of attempting use of a weapon of mass destruction, which carries a maximum punishment of life in prison, and providing support to a terrorist organization. The latter charge carries a maximum of 20 years in prison.



Suarez

Suarez was arrested in 2015 after an undercover FBI sting in which he is accused of buying an insect bomb intended to blow it up in a backpack on a Key West beach. The government alleges Suarez expressed support and/or sympathy for the Islamic State on social media and in undercover FBI operations.

In many criminal trials, a paid informant is often someone with a criminal record who is looking to lessen their own jail time or cooperating for some stellar reason.

But "Muhammad" told jurors he was a former military man who is now in college working on his master's degree with the intent of becoming a medical doctor and decided to work with the FBI for patriotic reasons. Whichever "Muhammad" is in real life remains a mystery, but he is a practicing Muslim, he told jurors. He explained many of the Islamic terms he used with Suarez with jurors numerous times throughout the day.

He told Suarez that he was from Palestine and now lives in West

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## Hospital working to repair reputation

BY MANDY MILLES

Key West Citizen

Independent consultants are analyzing the prices that Lower Keys Medical Center charges its patients, hospital CEO David Clay announced Tuesday during an open public forum that preceded the hospital governing board's regular closed-door meeting.

Clay's announcement came in response to a question about whether a reduction in patient charges is included in the hospital's ongoing mission to improve its one-star rating in the health care industry and repair its reputation among residents.

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## School Board honors local education advocate

## Marina's gas studied after boats shut down